

DIXIE · KITTEN



By · EVA · MARCH · TAPPAN

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DIXIE KITTEN



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By Eva March Tappan

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THE HOUSE WITH THE SILVER DOOR.
WHEN KNIGHTS WERE BOLD.
DIXIE KITTEN.
AN OLD, OLD STORY-BOOK.
THE CHAUCER STORY BOOK.
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AMERICAN HERO STORIES.
THE STORY OF THE ROMAN PEOPLE.
THE STORY OF THE GREEK PEOPLE
THE GOLDEN GOOSE AND OTHER FAIRY
TALES.
THE CHRIST STORY.
OLD BALLADS IN PROSE.

All of the above are illustrated.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

DIXIE KITTEN



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BY

EVA MARCH TAPPAN

ILLUSTRATED



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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

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**THIS IS
A TRUE STORY
ABOUT A REAL CAT
AND IT ENDS
HAPPILY**



DIXIE KITTEN was a slender little cat with the softest, silkiest black fur imaginable; that is, you would think it was black when you first glanced at it; but if you looked a little more closely, you would see that here and there were gleams of tawny yellow. Three of her paws were black and one was yellow. Her eyes were yellow, too, in the daytime, with only a narrow line of black down the centre; but at night they were black and shining, and surrounded by a ring of golden yellow. But whether it was day or night and whether they were yellow or black, there was little going on around them that they did not see. Her whiskers, all except two, were jet black,

but those two were snowy white. When she lifted her pretty chin, you could see under it a soft yellow "vest front," and at the top of the vest front a bit of the whitest, glossiest fur that was ever seen. It was so very pure and dainty that when the sunlight fell upon it, you would almost fancy that it was a bit of filmy white lace.

The first thing that Dixie could remember was of being cuddled up to some one who was soft and comfortable and gave her sweet warm milk to drink. Somehow, she knew that this was her mother, and that her mother would feed her when she was hungry and keep her warm and take care of her and not let anything hurt her.

Their home was a nest of soft hay, so deep in the pile that when Dixie was at the farther end, she could not see out at all. After a while, however, she crept out to the light now and then, and here were so many interesting things that her eyes

grew bigger and bigger the longer she looked. There were piles of hay and straw, there were bags of grain, there were rakes and spades and wheelbarrows, there was a carriage, and there was a sleigh. Dixie climbed up one of the shafts of the sleigh and stretched out her paw to touch a bell. She only wanted to see what it was, but it made such a loud jingle that she almost fell off the shaft. She ran away as fast as ever she could and hid herself in the safe and comfortable hole in the hay.

There were strange noises, too, that Dixie kitten heard, even when she was far out of sight in her own little nest with her mother. There were voices of men and the sound of their steps; there was the happy "Bow-wow!" of a dog; there was the neighing of horses and their crunching of grain, and the sounds of harnessing and unharnessing. Twice every day the great doors of the barn were thrown open

and the Master drove in. She could hear him pat the horses and the dog and speak kindly to them ; then his steps passed out of the barn and up the walk and into the house.

Dixie's mother had made her understand that she must stay near the home nest ; but there was a flight of steps close by, and Dixie did so long to go down them ! She felt sure that they led to where those wonderful things that she heard must be. Her mother went down the steps sometimes, and one day when she was gone away from home, Dixie kitten thought that she would go, too. She went to the head of the stairs and stretched out her little right forepaw very carefully ; but it would not reach the first step. She stretched out the left paw, but that would not reach any farther. She drew back and sat looking down the staircase for a while. Then she tried again, and this time she

reached so far that not only the two little black forepaws, and the black hind paw and the yellow hind paw, but also her whole little black and yellow body tumbled down one step, two steps—and no one knows how much farther she would have gone, had she not come, plump, right against her mother, who had seen what was going on and was hurrying up the stairs as fast as she could run. Dixie was a much surprised little kitten, for her mother lifted her by the back of the neck and carried her straight to the little nest in the hay. Then Dixie was still more surprised. She had always thought her mother's smooth soft paws were only beautiful playthings, but now one of them gave her a pretty hard cuff right on her ears. Even if Master had been listening, he could not have heard Mothercat say anything, but Dixie kitten understood perfectly well that she would get into

trouble if she went near that staircase again.

And yet, the very next day Mothercat lifted Dixie by the neck and carried her downstairs, and neither of them ever saw the soft warm nest in the hay again.



THIS is the way it came about that Dixie kitten and her mother left the home nest. At night, when Master came home, he stepped down from the carriage much more slowly than usual, for he was holding a big basket carefully in his hand. He did not go into the house at once, but climbed up the stairs and stood at the top a moment looking around. He had set the basket on the floor, and now he called, "Kitty, Kitty!" Mothercat listened a moment, then peered out of the nest, her eyes as big as saucers. Dixie kitten crept out between her mother's forepaws, for she, too, had heard a gentle "Mew!" coming from the basket, and even a kitten could guess what was within it. She was so eager

that she could hardly wait to see it opened; but Mothercat crouched low and lashed her tail angrily back and forth. Then Master took off the cover of the basket, and what should be in it but four little kittens!

Dixie kitten was delighted. She climbed over Mothercat and started to run out to see them; but once more Mothercat boxed her ears with her big soft paw, and Dixie had to go to the back of the nest in the hay. "Kitty, Kitty!" called Master, "come and see the new kittens"; but Mothercat did not stir from her place, and she swished her tail more angrily than ever. Master gave the new kittens a dish of milk, and then he went away.

The kittens drank the milk, then they began to run about the room. They climbed the heaps of hay and straw and they smelled of the bags of grain. They ran over the carriage and the sleigh and the wheelbarrow. They touched the teeth

of the rake curiously with their small pink noses. Once they went near the little nest where Mothercat crouched, watching everything that they did. "Gr-r-r-r!" growled Mothercat; and they ran away from her corner as fast as ever they could. It began to be twilight. They were lonely and somewhat frightened, and pretty soon they curled up together in a soft little heap and went to sleep.

Dixie kitten went to sleep, too, but Mothercat sat a long time thinking. Master meant those new kittens to stay there, that was plain. It was her house, the place that she had picked out so carefully as a home for her kitten, and he had put those strangers into it! She had never thought of Master's doing such a thing as that; but there they were, and what should she do? There was one thing sure, she would not live in the same house with them, and her kitten should have nothing

to do with them. She waited until it was dark and everything was quiet downstairs except the occasional moving of the horses and once or twice a sleepy bark from the dog, Prince, who was dreaming that he had caught a rabbit. She listened awhile, but there was nothing more to be heard. Then she picked up Dixie kitten by the back of the neck and stole quietly down the stairs. Master had cut a hole in the barn door, so that no cat need ever be shut out, and she slid softly through this, and went under the barn. It was open on one side, but the air was warm, and she knew where there was a heap of straw. She pushed it about a little with her paws, then she turned round and round to make a smooth nest, and at last she lay down, and Dixie kitten lay down beside her. Dixie thought all this was very strange, but of course whatever Mothercat did was right, so she snuggled down, and in three min-

utes she was sound asleep. Before long, Mothercat was asleep, too. The coarse straw was not so comfortable as the hay, but, whether it was hard or soft, she would not stay in the same place with those strange kittens, indeed she would not.

When morning came, Mothercat went into the barn to get the breakfast that was always brought out for her, and there were those kittens eating out of her dish! She stood still and looked at them. Dixie kitten had followed, and now one of the strangers went toward her in a friendly fashion. "Gr-r-r-!" growled Mothercat, and the kitten ran back to the dish. Mothercat did not touch the milk, and maybe she would have had no breakfast at all, if Mistress had not come out to see the new kittens. "Why, Mothercat," she said, "are n't you going to be good to those little stranger kittens?" Mothercat did not answer, but she did not go any nearer to

the dish. "She'll soon get used to them," said Master; but Mistress slipped into the house and brought out another dishful of milk. Master laughed, but Mistress said, "Never mind. I don't know that *I* want to eat out of the same dish with everybody, either." Then Mothercat ate her breakfast, but all the while she kept one eye on the new kittens to make sure they did not go near her child.

So it went on day after day and week after week. Dixie kitten was soon old enough to drink from a dish. Mothercat allowed her to use the same dish as the others, but never once would she let her stay and have a good play with them; Dixie could not see why. The new kittens still lived in the barn, and Dixie and Mothercat still lived under it.

DIXIE FINDS A FRIEND



DIXIE grew until she was much larger than when she first lived in the nest in the hay, and she learned a number of things from Mothercat. She learned that to keep her fur clean and dainty she must wash it several times a day, and that nothing else made it so soft and smooth and silky as to wash it after she had just been drinking some good creamy milk. She learned that mice were to be caught ; that beetles and other queer creatures of the sort that ran about in the grass were to be played with, but not eaten ; that horses never ate kittens, though without meaning to do any harm, they sometimes stepped upon them. Dogs, she learned, were quite different from horses in their treatment of cats. One should always run away from dogs,

not on the ground, but up some tree-trunk, for dogs cannot climb trees; and Dixie thought it was great fun to scamper up a tree, curl up on a branch, and sit there comfortably while a dog barked at the foot and tried in vain to reach her. Prince chased other cats, but if any dog troubled the kittens in *his* barn, then in about three seconds the strange dog was running down the street with Prince at his heels. Prince was a little puzzled about Mother-cat and Dixie. They came into the barn to eat and Mistress fed them, but they lived under the barn instead of in it. This was strange, Prince thought, and he hardly knew whether he ought to take care of them or drive them away. He decided that he ought not to do them any harm, but that he might give them just a little chase now and then. They understood this as well as he, and after he had driven them up a tree, they would come down, go into

the barn, and eat their dinner beside him as peaceably as possible.

Of course Dixie kitten had learned to climb any tree in the neighborhood. She had learned also what some kittens never do learn, and that is, how to come down again. The stranger kittens were always scrambling up smooth, slender saplings, and then tumbling back to the ground or crying for some one to come and help them. One of them climbed a telephone pole, and there she sat on a crosspiece, not daring to come down. She cried so piteously that at length Master sent to the fire engine company on the next street and paid a man a dollar to bring a ladder and take her down. And the next day he had to send for the man once more, for that foolish kitten had climbed the pole again !

Dixie kitten had learned, then, how to behave toward mice and beetles and horses and dogs ; but People were quite

another matter. In the first place, they did not live either in barns or under them, like kittens, but in houses. She had often watched Master and Mistress go up the steps and into their house; and once, when she was quite small, she, too, had slipped in when the door chanced to be open. She had walked on a thick carpet that was much more agreeable than the bare ground or even the barn floor. She had seen sofas and easy chairs, and she had jumped up on a cushion that was far softer than even the home nest in the hay. There was plenty of room and no other kittens were to be seen. The People, however, had not allowed her to stay there, but had driven her out at once, she wondered why. In other ways, too, than their manner of living, People were quite different from dogs and horses and cats. Their fur was of different colors on different days, and one never knew how they

were going to behave. Sometimes they gave kittens good things to eat, and sometimes they did not. Sometimes they spoke to them or patted them, and sometimes they hurried by without seeming to see them. They had long arms, and sometimes they reached out and lifted a kitten far up into the air. Then if she was frightened and tried to keep herself from falling by sticking her claws into them, they were not pleased, and often they dropped her upon the ground. To be sure, none of these things had ever happened to Dixie, for Mothercat had taught her to keep away from People ; but she had seen them all occur more than once, and she had made up her mind never to have anything to do with People.

Two-footed folk often change their minds, and sometimes four-footed folk do the same ; and it was not long before the little black kitten began to look at this

matter somewhat differently. Just beyond the barn were some apple trees and syringas and rosebushes and grapevines and a green lawn with bright blue forget-me-nots in the grass, the very place for kittens to run about and play. A fence shut off the stranger kittens, but Dixie and her mother could slip out from under the barn and have many a fine run over the grass or up the trees when no one was looking. At the end of the lawn was a cottage. There were People in it, but that did not trouble Dixie and Mothercat especially, for they never interfered. Sometimes Lady sat on the piazza with a pile of books, sometimes she picked a handful of flowers or broke off the dead twigs from some bush. When she saw Dixie and Mothercat, she always spoke to them, and they stopped and looked at her; but if she came toward them, they ran away.

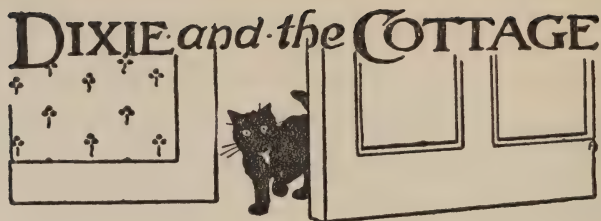
Dixie had now grown so large that Mo-

thercat no longer watched her so closely. Probably she thought that the kitten had learned how to take care of herself and keep out of danger; but she might have changed her mind if she had guessed what Dixie was thinking of in her wideawake little brain. She would certainly have thought that Dixie was not doing credit to the careful teaching that she had had. Dixie was thinking hard about Lady, for there was something about her that the kitten liked. She was People, of course, but Dixie had come to the conclusion that People were not all alike. The kitten had seen a good deal of her of late—at a distance, for now that the weather was warmer, Lady was out of doors much of the time. Dixie was out almost all day, and much of it was spent among Lady's trees and flowers. Lady frequently spoke to her, but Dixie made no reply. Still, her bright little eyes were watching.

After a while one might often have seen a half-grown kitten with old-gold eyes creeping quietly around the lawn, keeping close to the fence, but holding her eyes fixed upon Lady. One morning when Lady was tying up the morning-glory vines, the small kitten screwed up all her courage and started toward her. Dixie ran as fast as ever she could, for she wanted to come, and yet she was afraid. She was all a-tremble, and her heart was beating fast; but she kept on bravely. Lady was not looking down at the path, but up at the vines, and the first that she knew, a black kitten was rubbing against her ankles and purring with all her little might. Lady stooped and patted the kitten's head and talked to her awhile very gently; then she started to go into the house. This was not such an easy thing to do, for the kitten was so happy that she kept running back and forth before her feet and purring

like a tiny spinning-wheel. This was the way that a wild little kitten found a friend who was to do more for her than she ever dreamed.

DIXIE *and the* COTTAGE



LADY was always kind to Dixie when they were under the trees together, but she had a way of going into the house and closing the door which the kitten thought was rather unfriendly. Some weeks passed; then, as Lady turned to close the door one morning, she saw a round black face with two shining yellow eyes pushing in shyly. "I don't know about this, kitty," said Lady; but Somebody Else said, "Oh, let her come in just a minute"; and Lady held the door ajar. The kitten crept in, but very timidly, for she had not forgotten that when she had run into a house before, she had been sent out at once. She did not venture very far, but she did put her little feet on a soft rug, and in a room beyond

she saw cushions and a sofa that she thought would be a most delightful place for a kitten to lie down and have a nap. She took only one look, then she ran back to the door and slipped out, for she did not know what might happen if she stayed longer.

Every day the kitten became a little less timid, though she was still easily startled by anything that was new to her. All cats like to be rubbed gently under the chin; but when Lady first rubbed her there, right over her dainty bit of white fur that looked so like lace, the kitten drew her head away and looked back over her shoulder at Lady's hand as if it was something she had never seen before and she did not know what strange things it might do. It was not long, however, before she learned that nothing Lady did would ever hurt her. She had now grown brave enough to follow Lady about under the trees and

among the grapevines and roses and syringas; and when Lady stooped to pick a spray of forget-me-nots, she was very likely to feel a smooth black furry head pushed under her hand, for the wild little kitten who had made up her mind never to go near People was fast learning that to have a good friend among them was the best thing in all a cat's little world.

Before long Lady said to the kitten, "Little cat, you really must have a name. Some dear friends of mine once had a pretty cat whose name was Dixie, and I am going to call you Dixie. Do you like it?" The kitten made no answer, for a fly was creeping slowly up the gate-post, and she was getting ready to jump for it; but it was only a short time before she knew her name as well as anybody. The other kittens would come if any one called "Kitty, Kitty," but this one paid no at-

tention to any calling unless she heard some one say "Dixie."

So it was that Dixie found a friend and a name. Mothercat had watched this new friendship, and she did not seem to disapprove of it; but she never allowed Lady to come near herself. People had never been unkind to her, but still she was afraid of them. Lady always believed that if she had lived longer, she would have become friendly; but about this time Mothercat got a bone in her throat and could not get it out. Master and Mistress both tried their best to help her ; but she was so wild and frightened that she would not let them do much for her, and before long Mothercat was dead.

All this time Mothercat and Dixie had been going to the barn for their food, and as the weather grew colder, they were finally obliged to go there to sleep. The stranger cats had taken the best places, of

course, but they made warm nests for themselves and were not uncomfortable. After Mothercat died, Dixie hated to go to the barn. The stranger cats looked upon it as their home, and treated Dixie as if she were the stranger and had no right to come there. Sometimes they growled at her, and although she was a stout-hearted little fighter and was not one bit afraid of them, it was not at all pleasant to have to eat and sleep with cats who did not want her. She began to do some more thinking in her wise little head. She did not like the barn, and she did like Lady's cottage. There were no other kittens in the cottage, and there was plenty of room; but would Lady let her come? She had followed Lady about the lawn, they had sat on the piazza together, and once or twice she had jumped into Lady's lap. Lady had always seemed glad to see her, but had never invited her into the house. Never-

theless, Dixie meant to see what could be done.

The result of all this thinking was that one day, when there was a remarkably good smell coming from Lady's kitchen, a little black nose was stretched up to the partly open door and a little red mouth was opened wide. Dixie seldom mewed, but when other cats would have mewed, she only opened her mouth appealingly. "Well, is n't that cunning!" cried Somebody Else. "Dixie has come to dinner." "Don't feed her," said Lady; "she belongs to Master and Mistress. She must understand that she can come to visit, but that the barn is her home." Lady was called away just then. If she had not been, I am afraid that before long she would have done just what Somebody Else did, that is, cut off a nice bit of lamb and put it into the tiny red mouth.

So it went on day after day. At first

Lady said firmly, "Somebody Else, you must not feed that cat." After a while she said, "I am afraid it will make trouble if you keep feeding the kitten." Then she said, "Somebody Else, we really ought not to feed Dixie"; and before long she came to the kitchen after every meal to make sure that there was a saucer of something good set down on the floor. At length matters actually came to the point where she said one day, "Somebody Else, we'll have those oysters fried instead of scalloped; Dixie likes them much better fried."

Dixie was now a happy little cat. She perched herself on the piazza railing and ran up the apple trees and played with the beetles and grasshoppers as much as ever she chose. When she wanted to come into the house, she jumped up on the sill of the piazza window, and there was always some one ready to let her in. When she

ate her dinner, no other cat was there to growl at her, for was she not the one and only kitten of the house?

Of course the stranger cats had noticed what was going on, and sometimes they tried to come in and get a taste of the good things that smelled so tempting; but this Dixie would never permit. She did not growl or spit, but if any other kitten dared to take bite or sup from her dish, then a resolute black paw shot out quick as an arrow and struck the intruder with a hard little cuff that sent her scampering out of the door. Once or twice some one of the stranger cats slipped in first and emptied the saucer. Then Dixie was so angry that she dashed out of doors like a little black whirlwind, ran up the path toward the gate, and sat down with her back to the house. She swished her tail angrily and occasionally looked back over her shoulder reproachfully at Lady and Somebody Else,

who had permitted such cruel things to happen.

Room after room, Dixie went over the house. She examined every foot of the cellar, for she hoped to find a mouse or two there. Early one morning she ventured upstairs for the first time. It was all new and strange and quiet, and Lady was nowhere to be seen. Dixie gave a faint timid mew, which meant, "I am lonesome and frightened. Lady, where are you?" Lady called, "Come, Dixie," and Dixie sprang upon the great bed, the happiest little cat in the city. When Mistress came in, she often saw her kitten lying on the sofa or in Lady's lap, or running about from one room to another, and she said, "You know she is only a barn cat, and she has never been taught how to behave. She may break things or get into the food." But Dixie had pretty clear notions in her small head of how kittens should act, and

she was a charming little visitor. Of course she made a few mistakes. One day Somebody Else found her on a shelf in the pantry having a fine time with a dish of corn. Dixie glanced at her with a look that seemed to say, "Of course this is all right, is n't it?" and went on eating. Somebody Else set her down on the floor, saying, "No, Dixie, you must not touch that"; and Dixie understood that, no matter how tempting food might look, she must not touch it unless it was given to her. She learned her lesson so well that never again did she meddle with anything eatable, not even when she was shut into the storeroom by mistake one day and left there for half an hour. Here were corn and fish and milk, all on low shelves in plain view, and it was dinner-time; but not one mouthful did she take. When People sat down to the table, Dixie curled herself up on a cushion as if this business of eating

was a matter with which she had nothing to do. Just once she broke through her rule of good behavior. There were guests at the table. They were busy talking, and it must have seemed a long, long time for a hungry kitten to wait for her supper. One of the guests had just said, "How well your cat behaves at meal-times," and Lady was replying, "Yes, she never pays the least attention to us when we are eating," when, behold, an impatient little cat made one bound to the sideboard and prepared for another to the table. This, however, was the only time that she ever did such a thing; and there are not many People who have not made at least one mistake.

DIXIE'S TROUBLES.



DIXIE was very happy, but even the happiest little cat has her troubles, and Dixie had one great grief and disappointment. Every evening, just as she was having the most delightful nap that could be imagined, Lady began to straighten out the books and papers, push the chairs back, and fasten the windows. Dixie watched all this with her bright, round eyes, for she knew that the next thing would be, “Come, Dixie, time to go to bed”; and then she would be put out of the door and have to go back to the barn to sleep. It seemed very hard that while the soft cushion was to be there alone all night long, she could not be permitted to use it; but Lady always said, “No, Dixie, you must run home now”; and one night when it

was snowing fast, Lady put on some rubber boots and carried her over to the hole in the barn door rather than let her lie on that warm cushion all night.

This, then, was Dixie's one trouble, for a cat's home is where her bed is, and Dixie did so want to make her home with Lady and not in that barn. The trouble became worse and worse, for Dixie was going to have some kittens of her own, and where should she make a cosy nest for them? She could not bear to have them in the barn, for she did not feel that she was a barn cat any longer, she was a house cat, even if she did have to go to the barn to sleep. In every pretty coaxing way that she knew she begged Lady to let her stay in the house. She picked out one corner after another that she thought would be just the place for baby kittens. One was on the padded cover of a shirt-waist box in Lady's room. Another was in the deep drawer of

an old-fashioned bureau that chanced to be left open a few minutes. Her favorite place, however, was in a big, round basket. She learned to push the cover off with her paw, and she would cuddle herself down in a little ring and look up at Lady pleadingly. "No, Dixie," was always the answer to her begging, "you must not stay there." She lay on the sofa much of the time. If Lady was near her, all was well; but when Lady went anywhere else, Dixie followed. When Lady sat down, Dixie seated herself directly in front of her, and made plaintive little moans and gazed straight up into her eyes so beseechingly that more than once Lady slipped out of sight and went away from the house rather than to have to say no again and again.

"She must think it is pretty hard," said Somebody Else, "to be petted as long as everything goes smoothly, and then turned out of doors as soon as she is in trouble."

“But,” replied Lady, “you must remember that she is not our cat. She is a dear little visitor, but she belongs to Master and Mistress, and we must not let her make this her home.”

Dixie seemed to understand that they were talking about her, and she pleaded more earnestly than ever. When Lady sat down upon the sofa, Dixie would snuggle up beside her as close as possible, she would touch Lady’s fingers with the tip of her tiny red tongue, she would purr and look up into Lady’s face more and more coaxingly every day. Still Lady said, “No, Dixie, the barn is your home, and you must make a nest there for your kittens.” She even carried Dixie over to the barn two or three times, but the poor little cat always hurried back again.

At length there came a day when Dixie was plainly suffering. “She must go to the barn,” declared Lady. “Perhaps if I pull

down the shade of the piazza window, she will think we are away and will go back." She pulled the shade down, but Dixie did not go; she only crouched down in the corner of the piazza nearest the window, and sat there looking sick and unhappy.

Lady was almost as unhappy. She wandered from one room to another, restless and miserable. Every few minutes she came back to the sitting-room, pulled the curtain aside softly, and peeped out; and every time she saw the poor little suffering cat curled up in the corner. At last she said, "I'll carry her over once more, and perhaps when she is once there she will be willing to stay."

Lady started to carry her over; but close to the door lay a big yellow cat. He crouched low, almost as if he was about to spring, and little Dixie trembled and clung fast to Lady. Then Lady carried her straight home and into the house. "I

simply won't let any animal be so miserable and frightened," she declared. "Master is at his office and Mistress has a house full of company, so there's no one to ask; but that poor little kitten shan't suffer so, no matter whether she is mine or theirs. I'm going to make you a bed, Dixie," she continued, "and a comfortable place for the kittens."

Dixie certainly understood some of this at least, for when Lady hurried down cellar to look for a box and brought excelsior and a piece of blanket from the attic to line it with, Dixie followed, no longer moaning, but watching closely every motion. "We'll put it into this quiet room off the kitchen," Lady explained to Dixie; and she lifted the little cat and laid her into the soft, warm nest. Cats are not often willing to let People choose nests for them, but Dixie was happy and grateful, and she lay down at once. Lady made it all still

and dark around her and went away for a while. When she came back, there lay Dixie in the nest, and beside her were four of the dearest little kittens. One was yellow, and one was black, and the other two were black and white. They were named then and there. The yellow one was Buttercup, the black one Topsy, and the other two were the Heavenly Twins. Lady brought Dixie some warm milk, and then left her to rest with her four little furry kitty babies.

The LITTLE MOTHERCAT



DIXIE made the dearest little mothercat that was ever seen, and she was as happy as the days were long. At first she thought too much was going on in the small room off the kitchen, and twice she carried her babies off to Lady's study and picked out a snug, shady corner for them behind the door. Lady carried them back to the little room, and Dixie understood that they must stay there, and she did not take them to the study again. She took the best possible care of her kittens, and taught them all that Mothercat had taught her. She washed them ever so many times a day ; though as they grew older, they were so full of fun that if she did not keep fast hold of them with her forepaws, they would insist upon playing with her tail

or jumping up to try to catch hold of her whiskers.

As soon as it became warm enough, a big box full of straw was put out of doors for the kittens. Dixie kept close watch of them, and never let them go out of her sight unless Lady or Somebody Else was near. Then she seemed to think that she had a good nurse-maid, and at such times she often ventured to slip away for a bit of freedom and a short run by herself. These many kittens needed more milk than the milkman could spare, so it had to be brought from the grocer's. Sometimes it was rather late, and then they would all line up on the doorstep, stretch their little red mouths wide open, and call for their breakfast in a language that no one could fail to understand. All day long they played in the sunshine; or if it rained, they paddled their furry paws in the tiny streams of water like so many small chil-

dren, for they were no more afraid of water than if they had been ducks. They had breakfast and dinner out of doors, but when it was supper-time, they were all invited into the house to drink their milk and have a good romp. They climbed over the chairs and the sofa, and frisked around the legs of the tables. They ran after balls and jumped after strings. They tore up newspapers, and knocked down the shovel and tongs, and sometimes almost burned their tiny noses trying to find out whether the fire in the fireplace was good to play with or not. Topsy was more slender and lithe than the others, and it was great fun for her to squeeze herself under a certain willow footstool. Then her smooth little black paws would dart out and the yellow paws and black and white paws would dart in, and the four kittens would carry on a merry little mock battle together. Sometimes one was tired of play before

the others and slipped away to a corner of the sofa to take a nap. Then the others were as full of mischief as a nutshell of meat. One would take her seat on the arm of the sofa and stretch down her paw to give the sleeper a poke. Another would tickle her feet with a wicked little black nose; and sometimes the whole three would pounce upon her and roll over and over her until she gave up all hope of a nap and jumped up to have a paw-to-paw scramble with them. When the fun was over, they were ready to go out of doors to sleep in their box of straw. If it was dark, they slept all night; but if the moon was bright and Lady chanced to look out of her window, she was almost sure to see four little kittens frisking about and having the best time that any one ever dreamed of. Dixie rarely played with them. Indeed, even as a kitten she had hardly ever played, and when Lady had shaken a string

or rolled a ball temptingly before her, she had only blinked at it gravely and looked rather surprised that she should be expected to do such undignified acts as jumping at strings or running after balls.

There were other kittens just across the fence, but they belonged to the stranger cats, and Dixie would not allow them on the lawn. One day a tiny gray kitten ventured to slip through the palings to play with Buttercup and Topsy and the Heavenly Twins, and they had a fine time together for a few minutes while Dixie was lying in the sunshine around the corner of the house. Pretty soon she awoke, however, and in two minutes the merry play had come to an end. Dixie went straight up to the stranger kitten and apparently told it to go home as fast as it could go. The stranger kitten stood its ground bravely. It sat up as tall as it could and looked Dixie squarely in the eyes. Dixie

lifted up her paw and gave it such a hearty cuff that the little gray kitten really screamed with fright and pain. Then something happened that puzzled Dixie's brain severely, for Lady came hurrying across the lawn and caught up the terrified little gray kitten. She soothed it till it fell asleep, and she sat quietly with it in her lap till it woke up and was ready to drink some warm milk. Then she put it down gently on the other side of the fence. This was something that Dixie could not understand. Why Lady, her Lady, should be so good to a stranger kitten was certainly a mystery. She had watched it all in amazement and anger, and now she sat down on the grass to think it out. Of course she swished her tail, for she was more than a little jealous and angry. Here was a fine plaything, the kittens thought, and in spite of her little warning growls, they had a great game with it, till finally

their mother turned upon them and cuffed the one that chanced to be nearest. So they were all rather unhappy together, and just because of a friendly visit from one little gray kitten.

If Dixie had only known what real sorrow was coming to her, she would have looked upon this trifling annoyance of the visit from the stranger kitten as a very small matter. She had thought it was exceedingly hard when she had been sent to the barn every night instead of being allowed to sleep on the soft cushion in the warm, cosy sitting-room; and she had thought that no little cat was ever in worse straits than she when she was afraid that Lady would not let her make a nest for her kittens in the house; but a far worse trouble was on its way now, and poor Dixie's little heart would have almost broken if she had known what it was.



OF course Dixie had not been with People so long without learning the meaning of many of the words that they used. She knew "come" and "go," and "dinner" and "down," and a number of others; but she did not know "buy" and "house" and "move." She felt vaguely uneasy, however, for things began to happen that made her restless and nervous. Lady never sat on the piazza now; she was always going about the house and hurrying up and down stairs. Dixie had always fled to the study for quiet whenever too much was going on elsewhere; but now even the study was no refuge, for books were being taken down from the shelves and laid into wooden boxes. Quantities of

papers were carefully packed away and great basketfuls were carried down cellar and burned in the furnace. The parlor carpet was taken up, and the room was filled with boxes of books and furniture closely wrapped up in white cloth. Pictures were taken down and set upon the floor against the wall. Much sweeping and cleaning were going on. The worst of it all, however, was when a strange man came and began to pack the china into barrels, and then left the barrels standing in the sitting-room, — her sitting-room, where the sofa with the cushions was, and where the kittens always had their evening frolic.

In all this confusion the kittens were not at all troubled. They thought it was great fun to have the sitting-room full of barrels, and they had the best time of all their lives in jumping from one barrel to another and pulling out bits of the excelsior pack-

ing. The little mother, however, was anxious and worried. All cats dislike change and commotion, and this grew worse and worse. She hoped it would soon be over, but it was worse than house-cleaning, and she had thought that was as much as any cat could endure.

At last there came a dreadful day when horses stopped at the gate and strangemen went through the house and carried out boxes and barrels and furniture to load into great moving-wagons. Lady was nowhere to be seen, and Dixie fled. When it was dinner-time, she came to the piazza window, but Lady was not there. Somebody Else was not there, and Dixie was an unhappy little cat. After a while, Somebody Else set out a big saucer of fish for her and a big dish of milk for the kittens; but still Lady could not be found. The men had driven off with a load of goods, and Dixie ventured to creep up to Lady's room.

Something of hers might be on the bed, she thought ; she would lie down upon it, and maybe Lady would come soon. She went softly up the stairs ; but when she came to Lady's room, it was all bare. The carpet was gone, the furniture was gone ; there was nothing lying on the bed, for the bed itself was gone. Then Dixie gave one sad little moan. She was frightened and bewildered. What could have happened, and what was going to happen ? She walked slowly downstairs and went out of doors. The kittens were playing in the grass. One of them jumped up and tried to catch her as she went by to persuade her to play with them ; but she did not stop till she was in the darkest corner under the barn, — a wretched, despairing little cat. Just at twilight, Somebody Else set out a big dish of milk and another of meat and potatoes. Then she locked the door and went away, and all was dark and still and lonely. The

kittens soon went to sleep, but many a time during the evening the little mothercat crept out to look up to the house. There was no light anywhere, not even in Lady's room, where she had always seen it latest. After a while she went to sleep. Maybe things would be better in the morning; Lady would surely come back to her.

But when morning came, no Lady came with it, and the house was still shut tight. By and by the door was unlocked and opened; but it was a strange man who turned the key, and other strange men followed him. Dixie peeped in through the window. They were painting and papering and doing other things that she had not seen done before, and she jumped down from the window-sill and ran under the barn again. After a little, she heard some one call, "Dixie, Dixie!" and she hurried out. It was not Lady's voice, but she hoped Lady might be there. It was Mistress. She had

asked before what Dixie liked best, and now she had brought out a nice breakfast of it for her. She would have been glad to smooth the little cat's head and try to comfort her, but Dixie would have nothing to do with any one. Lady had gone away and left her, and she was broken-hearted. She was angry, too, to think that her beloved Lady should have treated her so cruelly. Nevertheless, all that day she watched, and all the next, and the next after that, angry to think that Lady had left her, and still hoping and hoping that she would come back.

At twilight of the third day, something happened, for Lady came back. She came especially to see Dixie kitten. At the first sound of her voice, Dixie jumped joyfully; then she remembered how unkind Lady had been, and when Lady began to smooth the little black head, Dixie slipped out from under her hand and raised up her paw and

struck her dear Lady with all her might; then she ran away and hid.

Lady was not angry, for she was one of the People who know how little cats and dogs and birds and horses feel. She understood how grieved and hurt the little kitten was; but there was nothing that she could do to help her just then. It would all have been right and comfortable if she could have explained matters to Dixie, but there was no way of making her understand.



It was a great pity that Dixie could not have heard and understood the little talk between Lady and Mistress before Lady went to the new house. "Master says you shall have her if you like," said Mistress. "But I know that he values her," replied Lady, "and if she will only go back to the barn and be happy, I won't take her. Suppose I leave her a few days and see if she won't be friendly with the other cats and live with them comfortably. If she really won't, then I will come for her." If Dixie had known of this talk, she would not have been so hurt and angry; but she supposed Lady had abandoned her, and she was miserable. She did not forget, but grew more and more angry as the days passed. Lady came to see her again. Dixie

was so glad that she could not help purring for a minute ; then she remembered Lady's unkindness, and she walked away up the path. She sat down with her back to Lady and looked over her shoulder at her reproachfully.

Lady meant to come for Dixie on the following day, but she was called out of town, and it was three weeks before she could set off with a rattan extension-case to get the kitten. When she came to the gate of the lawn, it was almost dark, and Dixie was roaming about close to the house, a lonely little shadow. The People who now lived in the house had been very good to the kittens. The Heavenly Twins had gone to live with a kind-hearted watchman, who wanted them to keep him from being lonely at night ; but the other two were living with the People in their old home. "We wanted to be good to Dixie," said one of the People in the house,

“and we tried to pet her. Sometimes after dark, when the children had gone to bed, she would come in and wander about from one room to another. If we paid much attention to her or tried to take her up, she would run out again; but if we let her alone, she would sometimes stay half the evening.”

Buttercup and Topsy were running about and playing as if nothing had happened, for kittens have short memories, and they had quite forgotten Lady. Indeed, they had almost forgotten Dixie, for when kittens grow large, they forget their mothers, and their mothers forget them, too. People who are mothers always love their children, no matter how tall they have grown; but cats cease to care anything about their kittens as soon as the kittens are old enough and big enough to take care of themselves.

Poor little Dixie was roaming about in

the gloom, alone and miserable, and too wretched even to run away. Lady put her hand upon her, and she was grieved to feel how thin the little cat had grown. Her silky fur was rough and harsh, and she did not seem half so large as she had been before. "You poor little Dixie kitten," said Lady, tenderly, "I shall have to frighten you for a little while, but I think you will be happy afterwards." She held the kitten firmly and put her into the rattan case. Mistress shut down the cover in a twinkling, and in half a minute the straps were fastened and Dixie was a prisoner. Of course she cried, for she was terribly alarmed; but Lady talked to her and soothed her, and before they were in the car she was quiet.

It was not long before the car stopped at the Road where the new house was. Lady got out and carried the extension-case to the door and into the house. A Caller was there, for Somebody Else had told her that

Lady had gone to get Dixie, and she had waited to see how the kitten would behave. "Though I don't believe Lady will be able to catch her," she had said. "Cats care nothing for people. They are selfish little creatures, and all they want is to be comfortable. Probably this one has forgotten all about her by this time."

When Lady came in, the Caller said, "You'd better open the case in the kitchen. The cat will probably be as crazy as a loon, and she may dash about and tear things and do a great deal of damage." So the Caller and Lady and Somebody Else and the case with the kitten all went to the kitchen; and Lady began very slowly and gently to loosen the straps. It was all so quiet in the case that she wondered whether it could have been so close that the poor little cat was half smothered, and she pulled the last strap off in a great hurry. "You'd better be careful," said the Caller, "and not have

your face too near. You never can trust a cat, and no one can tell what she will do. She may spring right at you." Lady did not believe Dixie would do any such thing, and she took the cover off in a twinkling. Dixie stepped quietly out of the case and looked around her. She saw Lady and Somebody Else, and she saw the Mother standing in the doorway. They talked to her, and patted her, and told her they were glad to see her. Dixie forgot the lonely days at the old house when she thought Lady had abandoned her. It was all past; Lady had remembered her and had brought her home, and now she was going to live with Lady and be really her own little cat. Never was a cat so happy before, and she purred so, she could be heard far into the dining-room. As Lady bent over her, she stretched up and tried to rub her face against Lady's. She ran about the room and touched with her keen little nose the

stove hearth, the chairs, the rugs, the table cover, one familiar thing after another; and every minute or two she ran back to Lady to tell her how glad she was to be with her.

“Dixie dear, how miserable you must have been,” said Lady, with tears in her eyes.

“I never knew that just a cat could be either so happy or so unhappy,” said the Caller, with tears in her eyes, too. As for Somebody Else, she had long been wiping her own eyes when she thought no one was looking; so it was really quite a tearful time. By and by Dixie discovered in a corner a little dish heaped full of the canned salmon that she especially liked, for on the way home Lady had stopped a minute to go into a store to buy it to celebrate the homecoming. Close beside the salmon was a half-open package that smelled wonderfully good. Even Dixie’s small black nose would not go into it, but it was too tempting to

leave, for it was catnip. At length she pushed in her little paw, curled it up, and brought out a mouthful, which she held up and ate just as a boy would eat a piece of candy.

It was pretty late in the evening by this time. The Caller went home, and Lady called Dixie to go to bed. There was a good soft bed all made ready for her in the cellar. It was in a barrel of shavings, for cats like to sleep high up from the floor. Near the barrel was a saucer of milk, for fear she might be thirsty in the night. It was all very comfortable, but I do not believe that Dixie went to sleep at once. Cats like to know all about a place that is new to them, and I have no doubt that she examined every corner of the cellar before she curled herself up to rest. I am almost sure, too, that she purred herself to sleep, and that she had happy dreams all night long.



WHEN the Caller went away, she said, “I never knew that a cat could behave like that. She acts as if she really loved you as much as a person could do. Still, they say cats care for places rather than people; and if I were you, I would shut her up for two or three days till she gets used to the house, and then she will not try to run away.”

“But if she wants to run away,” replied Lady, “I do not want to keep her here.”

And Somebody Else said softly to herself, “Run away? You could n’t drag her away.”

When morning came, a very happy and curious little cat stepped up from the cel-

lar and began to look about the house. There were only a few things in it that she had not seen before, but they were all in new places ; and so she found a great deal to examine. Instead of carpets, however, she found many rugs. She was not sure that she liked this, for sometimes she slipped a little on the hardwood floors. The stairs did not go straight up, but made a turn. This was a delightful change, for she could run up part way, then turn and look back through the balusters. After a while she came to the study. Here she found a new bookcase. It was far better than the tall ones, she thought, for it was much lower, and she felt sure that the top of it would be an excellent place for a kitten to take a nap. Two or three mirrors were now either hung low, or were over tables so she could jump up and look into them, and Somebody Else declared that the kitten would surely become vain if these were not changed, for

she liked so much to sit in front of them and gaze at her own little self. The windows she liked especially, for they were so low that even a little cat could stretch up and rest her forepaws on the sills and see all that was going on out of doors. Better still, at one of the windows Lady had put a plush-covered foot-rest, and here Dixie could sit comfortably in the sunshine and watch the People going by.

After a while Dixie began to wonder what was out of doors, and she let Somebody Else know that she wished the door opened. Somebody Else had not forgotten that the Caller had said the cat would run away; but evidently such an idea never entered Dixie's pretty little head. She walked slowly around the house. There was a piazza at the back; and that suited her; but she was still more pleased with the front piazza. It was reached by five or six steps, and there was a high railing where

a cat could sit; and no dog would dare to come near her. There were shrubs on either side of the walk, with fine cool places to sleep, or to lie awake and watch everything that was going on. There was plenty of grass, there were two gnarled apple-trees behind the house, and beyond them there was a fine old stone wall that had stood ever since the days when no one had dreamed of turning the great Baldwin orchard into house-lots. Some of the rough stones were covered with green moss, and they cast soft gray shadows. Here and there a bit of white quartz flashed in the sunshine. Bright orange nasturtiums ran over the wall, and some tall hollyhocks stood close beside it in neighborly fashion. It was a beautiful old wall. Dixie thought so, too; but the reason she liked it was because she was sure that in some one of those shadowy places she would certainly find a field mouse.

It took Dixie the whole forenoon to look at everything around the house and smell of it. Moreover, in the course of the morning she had a caller. It was not exactly a friendly call, for this Next-Door Cat had been in the habit of coming to see the People who used to live in the house, and she was not pleased to see another cat making herself at home there. She came through the little barberry hedge and said "Meow!" in a surprised and aggrieved fashion. I suppose it meant, "Who are you and what are you here for?" but Dixie did not deign to answer. She jumped upon the piazza railing and looked straight at the Next-Door Cat. The Next-Door Cat ran up the nearest apple-tree and looked straight at her. After a while, the Next-Door Cat said "Meow-ow-ow!" and came down from the apple-tree. She gave one more look over her shoulder at Dixie, but Dixie was opening and shutting her mouth as

fast as ever she could, as if she meant to devour everything in sight. The Next-Door Cat marched straight to the gap in the low barberry hedge and went home. This was Dixie's first caller.



So it was that the wild little barn cat became a house cat. She had come to live with busy people, and I fancy she thought that she was as busy as they. In the morning, as soon as she heard the steps of Somebody Else, she ran to the top of the stairs to be ready to come out the moment that the door was opened. The next thing to do was to go up to Lady's room. The door was almost always closed, but Dixie sat down beside it and waited patiently until she heard some little sounds within. Then she rubbed on the door with the little pads on the bottom of her paw, — very softly, to be sure, but Lady always heard her and opened it. Once in a while Dixie went out of doors when she first came up from the cellar, and occasionally it happened that she could not

get in again at once. That did not trouble her, for she had another way of reaching Lady's room that she liked fully as well as going by the hall and the stairs. Not far from the front piazza there grew an apple-tree. Dixie could run up this tree, walk carefully out on a slender branch, and jump to the piazza roof. A little way beyond the farther end of the roof was one of the windows of Lady's room. The blind nearest this roof was usually closed, and there was not room enough on the sill to hold even a kitten; but Dixie would go to the very edge of the roof and scratch. "Is that you, Dixie?" Lady would ask. "Meow," Dixie would reply, and any one would know that this meant "Yes." Then Lady would go into the little room that opened on the roof and let her in. So it was that every morning the kitten made sure that Lady was safe and sound, and came to purr to her while she was dressing.

After Lady and Dixie had both eaten breakfast, Lady took a few minutes for the morning paper. Of course it was a great help to her to have a small black cat lie on her lap ; and I am sure I do not know how she could have set her room in order unless the same little cat had sat on the window-sill watching her. When Lady went to the study, Dixie always went with her to stay by her while she wrote. This study was an excellent place for a nap. Sometimes Dixie lay on top of the low bookcase, where Lady had put a cushion for her benefit ; sometimes she stretched herself out on the carpet in the sunshine ; and sometimes she had a comfortable little snooze on a corner of the big library table. If she did not care to sleep, there were various things that a kitten could do in the study to amuse herself. She could sit at the window and watch the birds in the apple-trees, or sometimes a dog hurrying home across lots. She could run

over the typewriter keys if she chose, and even across the big table. Indeed, she soon learned that the surest way to make Lady pay attention to her was to walk slowly over the paper on which she was writing, or even to sit down upon it and begin to take a bath. Once she sat down upon a loose pile of books and papers, and a moment later books, papers, and Dixie slid to the floor together, with a great thump. She turned and gazed at them with surprise and wrath, but not the least bit of fear. She was afraid of sudden noises elsewhere, however. While a carpenter was at work in the kitchen, she utterly refused to eat her meals in the room unless Lady stood beside her. She seemed to feel convinced that Somebody Else was to blame for all that hammering, and for several days after it ceased she refused to have anything to do with her while in the kitchen, though she was friendly enough in other places. In

Lady's study she felt safe, and apparently she had come to the conclusion that in that room nothing could ever hurt kittens.

Whenever Dixie was in trouble she always ran to the study for comfort. One day she dashed into the room and sat down in front of Lady and gazed at her so earnestly and with such an air of wanting to tell something that Lady called to Somebody Else and asked if anything had happened to Dixie. "Sure, there has," replied Somebody Else. "Now that the screens are in, the window-sill is not wide enough to hold her, and when she jumped from the railing to the window, she fell down. She wouldn't stop for a bit of dinner, but ran upstairs as fast as ever she could go." Once when Lady had been away for a month, she missed the kitten after the first greeting. Some time later she went to the study, and there sat Dixie in the dark, patiently waiting for her to appear.

In some ways Dixie was remarkably obedient. If she was in the street and Lady knocked on the window, she would come running home as promptly as the best of children. If she was upstairs and Lady called her to come down, you could hear on the instant the jump of a little cat—often from a down quilt on a bed or from some other forbidden place, I am sorry to say—to the floor; and in half a minute she was hurrying downstairs to see what was wanted. One morning Lady called, but Dixie did not come. Some ten minutes later she burst into the kitchen like a little football rush with a long “Meow-yow-yow-yow!” which sounded so angry and indignant that Somebody Else called Lady and declared that something had surely gone wrong with Dixie. When Lady went upstairs, she saw what had happened. The heavy door had blown to, and it was plain that the kitten had been working at it with

her soft little paws until she had pushed it back far enough to let her squeeze through.

Part of Dixie's work was to drive away the stray cats and dogs that ventured on her lawn or under her apple-trees. Sometimes she herself played dog, and did her best to guard the house. One dark night there was a strange clanking sound in the back yard. Lady started for the door ; but before she could reach it, the little cat had crouched all ready to make a spring as soon as the door should be opened. The noise proved to have been made by a hungry dog at a garbage can ; and he ran away as fast as ever he could ; but I think Dixie would have enjoyed chasing him.

Evidently Dixie felt that her first duty was to keep watch of Lady ; and this was no easy matter when Lady was busy about the house. She hurried "upstairs and downstairs and in my lady's chamber" ; but wherever she went, a little black cat

followed her like a shadow. This shadow behaved somewhat unlike other shadows, however, for it had a way of catching at the hem of her dress in the hope of a frolic, or suddenly dashing around corners at her to surprise her, in a fashion which no properly behaved shadow would ever dream of following.

Another of Dixie's duties was to entertain the Mother. The Mother had always been afraid of cats, and she had never liked them, but she could not help liking Dixie. The kitten often went to her room and lay on a small high table in the sunshine while the Mother sat in her big easy-chair and talked to her. Dixie purred back, and they were very comfortable together, and the best of friends.

When callers came, Dixie was not altogether pleased. Sometimes she would turn her back on them, march straight upstairs, and not come down again until she heard

the front door close; but generally she thought it better to keep pretty close watch of them. She was inclined to think that Lady paid them too much attention; therefore she would often jump into Lady's lap and insist upon remaining there until they were ready to start for home.

Another one of Dixie's responsibilities was the telephone, and she always ran to it at the first ring. Her care of it was a great convenience to Lady, for the telephone bell and the doorbell sounded so nearly alike that before Dixie came, she had often made mistakes, and had hurried to the telephone when the doorbell rang. Dixie never made a mistake, however, and when Lady saw her running to the telephone, she did not have to guess which bell had rung. The telephone was as much of a mystery to Dixie as it is to some other folk. She would jump up on the table to listen, and would put her head on one side with

a puzzled look. One day she stretched out her soft little paw and touched Lady's lips to see if she could not find out where those strange sounds came from. Once Lady asked the friend with whom she was talking to call "Dixie!" Then the kitten was puzzled indeed. She looked at the receiver from all sides and even tried to get her head into it. At last she left it and jumped down from the table; for most certainly she had come upon something that no kitten could understand.



DIXIE had her small troubles, and she did not always bear them like a good child in a story-book. At one time Lady thought she was having too much salmon, and she set down some bread and milk for her. This did not suit Dixie at all. She sniffed at it and walked away. Through the morning she went to it once in a while, plainly hoping that it had changed into salmon; and each time when she saw that it was still bread and milk, she gave a little growl and turned away as angrily as a cross child that does not like his breakfast. She thought Lady would yield, and it was not until almost supper-time that she concluded to eat that bread and milk. Another one of her trials was the swing door between the pantry and

the dining-room. She did not like doors that went both ways and did not stay shut after they had been shut. Even when Lady or Somebody Else held the door open for her, she was afraid, and when she had screwed up her courage and run through it at full speed, she would turn and look at it over her shoulder as if there was no knowing what that thing might do yet, and she would not trust it behind her back for a moment.

Still another of her troubles was that neither in the attic, nor in the cellar, nor among the soft gray shadows of that beautiful old stone wall could she ever succeed in finding a mouse. I have no idea how many long nights she may have spent wandering about the cellar and watching beside every promising hole; but I do know that wherever in the house she might be, she never failed to hear the opening of the attic door. Then she would scamper upstairs as

fast as her feet could carry her. She would examine every corner and every hole, and finally walk slowly downstairs with as nearly a look of anger and disgust as her happy face could be made to wear.

Dixie finally concluded that there were no mice in her house, but she still hoped she might find one in that of her next-door neighbor. The first time that his cellar door was left open, she slipped in, and there she stayed. He tried to coax her out, then to frighten her out, and then he told Lady. Lady went to the door and said, "Dixie, come right home," and Dixie stepped down daintily from a pile of wood and went home. This was her last search for mice. The kind neighbor was sorry for her disappointment, and one day he brought her two that had been caught at his store. Dixie looked at them gravely. Then she stretched out her paw and touched one of them. It did not move, and she turned

around and walked away scornfully and ungratefully. She did not care for dead mice; what she wanted was the fun of catching live ones.

But of all the troubles that came to the petted cat, the very worst of all was her getting angry with Lady. There was a certain cushion that Dixie thought was specially her own, and one sad and sorry day Lady needed to open the box on which it lay, and put her off. Then Dixie was angry. Lady pointed her finger at her and said "Shame!" and told her she was a naughty cat. A cat cannot bear to be scolded. Dixie stood looking straight into Lady's face. She growled and she spit, and was in as furious a little temper as one could imagine. Suddenly she seemed to remember that it was Lady, her own best friend, toward whom she was behaving so badly. She stopped growling, turned away for a moment, and then came running up to

Lady, purring and rubbing against her feet, and trying in every pretty little way that she knew to make her understand what a penitent cat she was.

Most cats become more sedate as they grow older, but Dixie became more playful. When she was a barn cat, she never played, and she would gaze with the utmost gravity and a dignified air of indifference and surprise if any one tried to tempt her to run for a ball. Now, however, she was always ready for a game. She played with everything,—with a table leg, a corner of a rug, or the hem of Lady's dress. She played with the dry leaves on the ground. When it snowed, she played with the snowflakes. Sometimes she caught them in her paw and held them up to examine them more closely. Then when she found that they had disappeared, her look of amazement was comical enough. She would run out of doors in the rain and play

with the drops or with the tiny streams of water running off the sidewalk. She did not mind getting wet in the least, and sometimes she would sit a long while on a piazza post in a pouring rain. The moment she came into the house, however, she set to work to dry herself. With only her little tongue to use as a towel, this was rather a slow business, and two or three times Lady wiped her fur with a cloth. Dixie was somewhat surprised, but she did not object. Evidently she soon discovered how much trouble this saved her, and whenever she was wet, she would go to the drawer where her own particular towel was kept and wait till Somebody Else wiped her dry. One day she was so thoroughly drenched that she felt in need of comfort as much as towel, and she ran to the study to show herself to Lady. She stood in the doorway a moment, then walked up to Lady with a long and much aggrieved "Meow-ow-ow-ow!"

which meant, as any one might know, “Lady, is n’t this a shame? Did you ever see a little cat so wet before?”

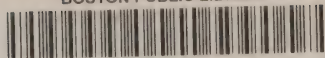
Dixie’s notions of what was proper and what was not proper were decidedly original. Things to eat she never touched unless they were given to her, but things to play with were free plunder. One unlucky day Lady gave her an empty spool, and after this all spools were her province. Unfortunately, she preferred those that had thread on them. She liked thimbles, too, and she would jump up on the table where Lady’s work-basket stood, select a thimble or a spool to play with, and jump down with it in her mouth. If she had a spool full of thread, she was happy; but when Lady came into the room, she did not always sympathize with the kitten in her pleasure, for that thread was almost sure to be wound about everything in the room except the spool.

Indeed, Dixie kitten of the house was a

very different little cat from Dixie kitten of the barn. She was as happy as the days were long. I might as well say, "As happy as the nights were long," for she did not dread bedtime now, as in the times when she was sent out of the warm sitting-room to the barn. She never stayed out all night, and she was always willing to go to bed. Lady could have told a secret about this if she had chosen. It was that Dixie knew a nice little lunch was always waiting for her at the foot of the stairs. It is no wonder that she did not care to spend nights away from home. The Caller stood by one evening while Lady was preparing the lunch. "How you do spoil that cat!" she said laughingly. Lady replied thoughtfully, "Spoil her? I only make her happy, and I don't believe it spoils either cats or people to be happy. What do you think about it, Dixie kitten?" and Dixie answered "Purr-r-r" contentedly.

Now when people wish to write the life of a person, they generally wait until he is dead — maybe because they are afraid he may contradict what they have said of him. Dixie is not dead by any means. She is sitting on the corner of the table this very minute, gazing straight at my paper; but this life of her is so true that it would not trouble me in the least if she should read every word of it.

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